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WHA FOR CALEB MCCARRY AND KIRSTEN MADISON

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [SP](#) [CU](#)
SUBJECT: PROFILES OF SPAIN-BASED CUBAN GROUPS

Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for reason 1.4 d.

11. (C/NF) SUMMARY: Thanks to family ties and historical/cultural links, Madrid hosts a number of important Cuban civil society and human rights organizations. These groups influence Spanish political discourse and public opinion through participation in public events, writings in local publications, and direct contact with government and political leaders. MFA has recently used them as a substitute for meetings with dissidents who are actually in Cuba. Over the years, the Embassy has maintained contact with many of them. Following is a snapshot of the major groups, as well as their leadership, based on several key sources in the community as well as Embassy interactions with the various organizations. It is not a comprehensive listing and does not include the many "Cuba solidarity" groups operating throughout Spain, which are run out of the Cuban Embassy in Madrid and have no contact with us for obvious reasons. END SUMMARY.

-- OVERVIEW OF CUBAN COMMUNITY IN SPAIN --

12. (C) Estimates of the size of the Cuban community vary, but a best guess is that approximately 60,000 Cuban immigrants/exiles live in Spain. Most of the original immigrants, those who arrived shortly after Castro's takeover, reside in Madrid and other mainland cities and are generally established professionals who have integrated fully into Spanish society. The last major wave of arrivals in this category came during the 1970s. Compared to the Cuban-American community, Cuban immigrants in Spain as a group are far less politically active. This is an aging sector of the Cuban community and their children tend to identify themselves as Spaniards.

13. (C) A second major group of Cuban arrivals arrived between the late 1980s and approximately 2000. Many of these were economic migrants, artists, musicians and others who wanted to improve their standard of living during the Cuban economic decline in the 1980s and collapse of the 1990s. There was a strong incentive to live abroad during the 1990s, since Cuban citizens with authorization to live overseas enjoyed access to goods and services in Cuba denied to citizens without such status. Many of these immigrants settled in the Canary Islands and travel often between Cuba and Spain. This group is even less politically active than the earlier arrivals and there is a larger degree of support for the Castro regime than among older Cuban immigrants, who generally think of themselves as exiles rather than immigrants.

-- MAJOR CUBAN ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR LEADERS --

-- Union Liberal Cubana --

14. (C/NF) The Union Liberal Cubana (President: Carlos Alberto Montaner / Vice President: Antonio Guedes) is a small organization that is primarily a vehicle for Montaner, the noted author and Cuba human rights activist who divides his time between Madrid and Miami. Montaner is a regular columnist/opinion leader in major Spanish and international newspapers and an excellent source of information. He is generally right-of-center and has good relations with the Spanish opposition Partido Popular, particularly with Madrid Community leader Esperanza Aguirre. Montaner has an active international schedule.

-- Asociacion Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana --

15. (C/NF) Encuentro (President: Annabelle Rodriguez / Editorial Director: Pablo Diaz) is a left-of-center organization with a flagship semi-annual magazine that is highly regarded and includes commentary by contributors across the political spectrum. The online version (www.cubaencuentro.com) provides a comprehensive daily Cuba news wrap-up. In the past, Embassy Madrid regularly shipped thousands of copies of the Encuentro magazine to USINT Havana for distribution, but pouch logistics problems in Havana have forced us to reduce shipments.

16. (C/NF) Annabelle Rodriguez is the daughter of a former Castro-regime vice president and continues to have close family ties to the Cuban leadership through her sister, who is married to a high-ranking Cuban military official. Rodriguez has lived in Spain for more than 30 years and worked for the Spanish MFA during the Gonzalez government. Rodriguez irritated the regime during the 1990s, when she worked with the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) during the Felipe Gonzalez administration to encourage social democratic

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critics of the Castro government, and has not been allowed to return to Cuba for several years. She retains the close ties to MFA Secretary of State for Latin America Trini Jimenez that she developed during the Gonzalez era. Some in the Cuba community believe she is trying to regain a substantial role in Havana-Cuba private communications, but she does not appear to have succeeded in establishing particularly strong links to the Zapatero government.

17. (C/NF) Encuentro's Editorial Director Pablo Diaz is the son of a noted Cuban author and is more skeptical of the direction of events in Cuba than Annabelle Rodriguez. Diaz has gained substantial experience in dealing with Cuban government efforts to block and disrupt the Encuentro website.

18. (S/NF) Several of our sources claim that Encuentro is penetrated by the Cuban intelligence, noting that some Encuentro staff members are able to travel freely to and from Cuba in spite of their affiliation with the organization.

-- Fundacion Hispano Cubana --

19. (C/NF) The Fundacion Hispano Cubana (President: Guillermo Gortazar / Secretary General: Juan Moran) was initially considered a sister organization to the U.S. Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), but links between the two organizations have dissipated over the years. The group is right-of-center in the Spanish context. The Fundacion was initially quite active, but now serves primarily as a venue for various Cuban human rights and cultural organizations to make presentations. Its flagship magazine, "Revista Hispano Cubana," has a solid group of regular contributors. The president of the organization, Guillermo Gortazar is a Spanish citizen, and much of the leadership is similarly Spanish rather than distinctly Cuban. The group's website is www.hispanocubana.org.

-- Cuba Democracia Ya --

110. (S/NF) The Embassy exercises caution when dealing with

Cuba Democracia Ya (President: Rigoberto Carceller). It was founded in 1998 by Rigoberto Carceller, who was permitted to leave Cuba in 1993 after serving a jail term for his actions on behalf of Oswaldo Paya's "Movimiento Cristiano de Liberacion." Paya (a highly credible activist) does not vouch for Carceller or his activities in Spain. Various Spanish MFA, police, and security officials have identified Carceller as a Cuban government agent and reputable Cuba human rights groups are generally mistrustful of Carceller.

¶11. (C/NF) Regardless of any doubts regarding Carceller, he is a skilled self-promoter who has also developed ties with the Cuban American community. He has evidently lobbied for and obtained the support of the Fundacion Hispano Cubana, including a grant to set up his website (www.cubademocraciaya.org) and a glossy magazine describing his group's activities. Carceller is a vocal critic of the Castro regime and is often cited in news accounts regarding Cuba. He frequently organizes marches and demonstrations in front of the Cuban Embassy in Madrid.

-- Raul Rivero --

¶12. (C/NF) Rivero is a noted Cuban independent journalist and poet who was among the most high profile victims of the Cuban Government's crackdown on the democratic opposition in 2003. He was sentenced to more than 20 years in prison for receiving money for his articles published in U.S. publications (including web-based publications funded in part by the USG). Rivero served more than a year in prison, but was eventually permitted to leave Cuba for Spain along with his wife Blanca Reyes. Rivero is now a weekly columnist for Spanish daily "El Mundo" and a frequent participant in Cuba human rights events. Blanca Reyes is the European representative of "Damas en Blanco," a group of wives and relatives of Cuban political prisoners. Rivero has been harassed on occasion by pro-Castro groups organized by Cuban diplomats. He remains in close contact with dissidents on the island and, having been a long-time correspondent for official Cuban publications, is a good source of insights into Castro regime thinking.

¶13. (C/NF) Rivero and Reyes travel regularly to the U.S. Reyes' travel is complicated by the fact that she cannot renew her Cuban passport, so must travel on a Spain-issued "stateless person" document. Rivero and Reyes are usually stopped upon arrival in the U.S. for extensive secondary inspection, an unfortunate occurrence given Rivero's

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background and commitment to the fight against the Castro dictatorship.

-- Movimiento Cristiano de Liberacion --

¶14. (C/NF) The Movimiento Cristiano de Liberacion (Spain representative: Carlos Paya) is among the most important Cuban opposition groups in Cuba and Carlos Paya is the brother of MCL leader Oswaldo Paya. However, Carlos Paya is not especially active, despite the engagement of the U.S. National Democratic Institute and Spain-based organizations to assist him. Our sense is that MCL activities are a significant drain on his resources and he is quite busy with his regular job as an architect.

-- Union del Pueblo Cubano --

¶15. (C/NF) The UPC (President: Elena Larrinaga) was founded in early 2007 by a group of Cuban exiles/immigrants that had not been particularly active in the human rights community prior to the formation of the group. The organization claims 700 members and has initiated its first set of conferences, including a June 27 event moderated by Cuban author Zoe Valdes. The UPC also collaborates with Blanca Reyes and is visiting diplomatic missions to promote the nomination of the "Damas en Blanco" for a Nobel Peace Prize.

¶16. (C/NF) One respected contact in the community has expressed skepticism regarding the aims of the UPC. He notes that there is a marked economic angle to the work of the UPC in that they offer advisory services for individuals interested in receiving compensation from the Cuban Government for property confiscated in Cuba and have steered inquiries toward a particular law firm in Catalonia. He also notes that the makeup of the group is odd in that very few of the UPC's leaders had previously shown interest in Cuba human rights issues or otherwise involved themselves with the local Cuban immigrant community.

-- Comision Cubana Pro Derechos Humanos --

¶17. (C/NF) Comision Cubana Pro Derechos Humanos (President: Marta Frayde / Editor: Leopoldo Fornes Bonavia) is among the oldest Cuban rights organizations. Marta Frayde was an early supporter of the Castro revolution who turned on Castro and emigrated to Spain in the 1960s. Frayde is in poor health and Leopoldo Fornes does much of the work of the organization. Fornes is an expert in the history of Cuba human rights groups. The Embassy pouches the quarterly publication of the Comision to USINT Havana for distribution by the human rights officer.

-- Asociacion Espanola Cuba en Transicion --

¶18. (S/NF) The AECT (President: Rafael Rubio / Director: Matias Jove) was formed by a group of Spanish citizens involved in a variety of human rights causes, primarily centered around Latin America. In Spain, the group is associated with the conservative opposition Partido Popular, and has few contacts with the ruling Socialist Party. AECT sends books and other information materials to Cuban dissidents and organizes events such as web chats between Cuban and Spanish journalists. The AECT is a good source of information about Cuban-focused civil society events elsewhere in Europe. The AECT has been a sub-grantee of USAID funds through U.S.-based groups such as the "Center for a Free Cuba," but the group has asked us to protect this information.

-- Solidaridad Con Cuba --

¶19. (C/NF) Solidaridad Con Cuba (President: Ricardo Carreras Lario / Vice President: Juan Fauquier Pinas de Moraes) is linked to the AECT and is also comprised of Spanish citizens with an interest in Cuba human rights. It is a relatively new organization, but active on the Internet and sometimes in the media in drawing attention to rights abuses and developments in Cuba. It appears to have particularly strong links to the Movimiento Cristiano de Liberacion. The Embassy has not yet had direct contact with this group.

-- Editorial Colibri --

¶20. (C/NF) Colibri (Director: Victor Batista / Sub-director: Helen Diaz-Arguelles) is a publishing house specializing in high-quality books focused on Cuban history and society. Its books are highly sought after in Cuban dissident and political circles. Embassy Madrid occasionally ships

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quantities of these books to USINT for distribution. Helen Diaz is a close friend of Marta Frayde of the Comision Cubana Pro Derechos Humanos.
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